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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000895

SIPDIS

NAIROBI FOR SOMALIA UNIT

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TAGS: [DJ](#) [ER](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI FONMIN ON SOMALIA, ERITREA

REF: DJIBOUTI 891

Classified By: Amb. James Swan for reasons 1.5 (b)(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: According to Foreign Minister Yousseuf, the GODJ favors a two-track approach on Somalia: (A) bolster the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) through regional political intervention to avert TFG collapse and through funding from international partners for TFG security forces, and (B) marginalize extremists by removing Hassan Dahir Aweys from Asmara and "neutralizing" Hassan al-Turki. Yousseuf said Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum is seeking to organize an IGAD ministerial to intervene with the TFG. Regarding Djibouti's border dispute with Eritrea, Yousseuf said the GODJ continues to seek a diplomatic solution and has no interest in pursuing a military conflict with Eritrea, or involving other regional partners in such a conflict. End summary.

AVERT TFG COLLAPSE, PAY TFG TROOPS

¶2. (C) Ambassador met November 16 with Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Yousseuf for an initial courtesy call and to discuss regional developments. Yousseuf kept the conversation focused on Somalia. He noted that UN SRSG Amadou Ould-Abdallah plans to proceed with the next round of talks between the TFG and the Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia (ARS) in Djibouti on November 22. But meanwhile the TFG is in danger of collapse. Yousseuf explained that there is an urgent need for political intervention to shore up the TFG. He noted that Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum had called him the previous night to discuss plans to organize an IGAD ministerial "in the coming days" to address the new political crisis following the failure of President Yusuf and Prime Minister Hassan Hussein "Nur Adde" to agree on a new cabinet. Yousseuf said this IGAD ministerial would likely revisit the option of pressing for removal of TFG President Yusuf from office -- an option initially considered but then rejected at the October 29 IGAD summit in Nairobi.

¶3. (C) Yousseuf said the second key to salvaging the TFG is to pay its security forces. He conveyed a specific appeal from Djiboutian President Ismael Omar Guelleh that the USG support the planned 10,000-person TFG-led force. The personnel have already been trained and are prepared to report to work and to fight as long as their salaries are guaranteed. Yousseuf said the GODJ had also conveyed this request to the League of Arab States, via its SecGen Amr Moussa. Yousseuf later added that the GODJ sought not only direct USG financial aid, but also USG diplomatic support in encouraging others to contribute to the TFG force.

MOVE AWEYS FROM ASMARA, "NEUTRALIZE" AL-TURKI

14. (C) To further isolate extremist elements in Somalia, Yousseuf said the "ideologues" behind al-Shabaab must be removed. Hassan Dahir Aweys is considering leaving Asmara, Yousseuf reported. Aweys wants to make the "Hajj" to Mecca, but has still not made a firm decision to go. The GODJ has already contacted Saudi authorities to urge that Aweys be kept in Saudi Arabia should he make the trip. Yousseuf believed the departure of Aweys from Asmara and separation from his contacts there would effectively remove him as a threat.

15. (C) The other "ideologue" -- Hassan al-Turki -- poses a more serious threat and would not withdraw quietly from the scene, Yousseuf said. Al-Turki will have to be "neutralized one way or another" -- and Yousseuf made clear this meant captured or killed -- in order to end the threat he poses.

DIPLOMACY TO RESOLVE BORDER DISPUTE WITH ERITREA

16. (C) Yousseuf said the GODJ's efforts to resolve its border dispute with Eritrea are "focused on the diplomatic option." He recounted the long list of mediators agreed by Djibouti but rejected by Eritrea: African Union, Arab League, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, France, Qatar, and the United Nations. Briefly mentioning his November 4-5 visit to Iran and press reports that he had invited Iranian mediation, he laughed that Djibouti was "open to assistance from anyone" but did not elaborate. He dismissed the idea of any Djiboutian military action, saying the GODJ had withdrawn

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its forces from the border area precisely to avoid Eritrean provocation that could lead to further fighting. Djibouti has no interest in pursuing a conflict, or in involving its regional partners in conflict with Eritrea, he averred.

17. (C) COMMENT: Although he is an ethnic Afar and not as directly involved as the dominant Somali group, Yousseuf's remarks show the intense Djiboutian focus on developments in Somalia. Signs of this high-level interest include President Guelleh's message to the USG on funding the Somali security forces, Yousseuf's discussions with Seyoum on an IGAD summit, and GODJ consultations with the Saudis on the future of Aweys. The GODJ is clearly worried that further unravelling of the TFG would undermine the Djibouti process in which the GODJ is heavily invested. END COMMENT.  
SWAN